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School Committee Minutes 10-14-2003

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2003

7:30 PM

Present: Suzanne Owayda, Chair Sue Sheffler
 Paul Schlichtman, Vice Chair Jeff Thielman
 Joani LaMachia, Secretary Martin Thrope
 Barbara Goodman

Superintendent: Kay Donovan
Asst. Supt.: Joanne Gurry
Budget Analyst: Janet Collins
Director Sp. Ed.: Marilyn Bisbicos

Call to Order: 7:40 PM

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL MERIT STUDENTS

Chair, Suzanne Owayda presented awards to the Commended Students in the 2004 National Merit Program; 14 AHS students received commendations.

SUPERINTENDENT'S AWARD

Supt. Donovan presented the Superintendent's Award to the two top ranking AHS students, Rachel Montana and Anna Payne-Tobin

NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Brittany Suprenard received the National achievement award for placing in the top five percent of black students in the country.

ARLINGTON PARTNERS IN EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Julie Dunn, President of APEF, Jane Culbert, Treasurer and Judi Bohn presented a check in the amount of \$275,000.00 from the emergency fundraising that the group sponsored. APEF raised that amount of money in six weeks to support schools and teachers during the budget crisis. Mary Fischer, Director of Reading & Language Arts, introduced the seven reading specialists who were hired from the funds raised.

.. School Committee representative to the APEF Board
On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously
Voted to appoint Jeff Thielman as the School Committee representative to the APEF Board.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

.. Correspondence Ms. LaMachia reviewed correspondence.
.. Approval of Minutes:
On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was unanimously
Voted to approve the Regular meeting minutes of June 14, 2003.

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously Voted to approve the Regular meeting minutes of June 24, 2003.

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was unanimously Voted to approve the Regular meeting minutes of July 22, 2003

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was unanimously Voted to approve the Regular meeting minutes of September 9, 2003.

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was unanimously Voted to approve and not release the Executive Session minutes of July 22, 2003

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was unanimously Voted to approve and not release the Executive Session minutes of September 9, 2003

MINORITY HIRING REPORT

Supt. Donovan reported that currently APS employs 10 Asians, 6 Hispanics, and 10 African Americans. We have continued to belong to the Affirmative Action Recruitment Committee as well as requesting candidates to self-identify. The Superintendent is still studying the database created by the HR person but pointed out that we are unable to answer every application due to the elimination of the human resource position.

Break

Field Trip Approval

AHS Teacher Don Bockler and Kate Cremens-Basbas Director of Physical Education, requested permission from the Committee to sponsor a trip to Costa Rica during the February vacation. The proposal is a collaboration of Science and Physical Education adventure classes; the highlights of the trip include: Service-learning, Rainforest study and adventure activities. Mr. Bockler stated that the students would probably lose two days of school. Supt. Donovan requested that Mr. Bockler secure a letter of commitment from the travel agency on departure and arrival dates.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was unanimously Voted to approve the AHS Science/Physical Education field trip to Costa Rica during February vacation.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Introduction of Guidance Supervisor

Supt. Donovan introduced Eleanor Farinato as the new Guidance Supervisor. Dr. Farinato stated that she is happy to be working in Arlington; the staff has been friendly and made her feel welcome. Dr. Farinato worked in Cambridge for 33 years, speaks five languages, previously taught math, received her doctorate from University of Massachusetts, her masters' degree from Boston College and her undergraduate degree from Boston University.

MCAS Results –Dr. Gurry thanked Sue Sheffler for her MCAS piece in the Arlington Advocate. Dr. Gurry reported on the results in Arlington Public Schools.

Medicaid - Dr. Bisbicos reviewed the Medicaid reimbursement program. The program was initiated when the University of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Medical Assistance Program collaborated on ways to examine how cities and towns could recapture some money through Medicaid for medically related services for special needs students who were Medicaid eligible. The program has been in effect for approximately nine years. Arlington has collected approximately \$120,000.00 per year. Bonnie anticipates that the flow of money will continue although requirements of documentation and record keeping have increased.

Report on Board of Selectmen Meeting

Supt. Donovan reported that at the Board of Selectmen meeting each department gave a report on how their department fared with the budget cuts of the past year. Suzanne and the Superintendent made a short presentation on the resignations and retirees, new hires and what some of the schools' critical needs will be over the coming year. Supt. Donovan pointed out at the meeting that the APS staff is working without a contract and that needs to be a consideration in order to settle a contract.

Budget

The Superintendent noted that the budget book she had hoped to give was not yet ready.

After a request from Mr. Thrope that a discussion of the 2004 budget detail be placed on the next agenda, the Committee acknowledged the importance of the discussion but wanted to focus more on the FY2005 budget.

On a motion by Ms. Sheffler and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was Voted to refer discussion of the 2004 budget detail to the Budget Subcommittee; the subcommittee will report back changes in summary form (with as much detail as needed) to the full committee at the School Committee meeting on November 25, 2003. 6 yes-1 no vote (Mr. Thrope stated the reason for his no vote was that the last meeting in November was too long of a time to wait). Mr. Thrope amended the motion seconded by Mr. Schlichtman and unanimously Voted that the budget subcommittee also examines our budget transfer policy and how it relates to the example provided by MASC in its advisory on budget transfers.

Break

REPORT ON SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION

Chair, Suzanne Owayda reported on the superintendent's evaluation completed in June. Ms.

Owayda explained that the evaluation tool used by the School Committee is broken into 5 parts:

- .. Community – Superintendent Relations- The Superintendent met or exceeded expectations in this category. The Superintendent is very accessible and available to discuss her position/recommendations.

- .. Educational/Professional Leadership – the majority of the Committee stated that the Superintendent met or exceeds expectations with members noting that the Superintendent is very well informed on education issues, DOE regulations, NCLB and current best practices. AHS received full accreditation without any warnings this past year.

- .. Personnel Relationship/Management – received the Supt. meets expectations from the majority of the school committee. The Superintendent manages complex personnel issues very professionally and with great sensitivity. The administrative staff works very hard for the Supt. However the committee is concerned about the leadership, staff, and faculty morale at AHS. The committee voiced concern over some personnel issues specifically the guidance task force not addressed in a timely manner (since been resolved).

- .. Community Relations – the Supt. exceeds expectations noting the Supt. Donovan communicates effectively with town officials, boards and community groups. She has generated substantial support for our schools and has earned support and trust in her leadership.

- .. Business Finance and Operations - the majority of the Committee evaluated the Superintendent as exemplary – the Supt. is very strong on financial management, she has earned high praise for her proactive and comprehensive work on the budget; this has earned her the respect of key town officials.

The Chair noted that she believed it was a very good evaluation and thanked the Superintendent for her hard work and dedication. Suzanne noted that it is impossible to run a school system without controversy and strong differences of opinion; it is hard for many to understand the enormous responsibility of leading a school system of 4400 students, a 30 million dollar budget, 9 buildings, approximately 450 employees, in a very demanding community with constantly changing state and federal requirements

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- .. Budget – Mr. Schlichtman reported that the subcommittee met on October 9th. Richard L. Trembowicz, President of EdTech Networks, Inc. made a presentation pertaining to EdNets, a website and data management developer.

Ms. Sheffler will write a proposal that details possible fees and service implications for the budget to present to the community regarding non-mandated programs.

Mr. Schlichtman will contact Mr. Tosti for a conversation pertaining to the O'Neill formula.

We will ask our new CFO to prepare a report on "informal agreements" such as the O'Neill formula prior to discussing O'Neill. Andover will be added to the list of comparison communities for the discussion of informal agreements.

Questions pertaining to restructuring and redistricting will be placed before Community Relations prior to the second full School Committee meeting.

The committee discussed how we should build the FY05 budget. We will engage our new CFO in a discussion on budgeting before we make a decision.

Mr. Schlichtman noted Ms. LaMachia's departure from the budget subcommittee and thanked her for creating the subcommittee and all her hard work.

The School Committee will host a public forum/discussion on extra curricular/activity fees on October 29th at the Ottoson Middle School.

.. Policy & Procedures:

Approval of Policy IJNDD E-Mail Distribution List

On a motion by Mr. Thielman and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was unanimously Voted to approve Policy IJNDD E-Mail Distribution List.

.. Curriculum & Instruction Ms. Goodman reported on its subcommittee meeting discussing the impact of prerequisites at the high school. Department heads reported that there are approximately 8-9 misplaced students per subject area and although the number is not significantly different from past years the impact is greater due to the lack of class sections offered due to budget cuts. Most of the misplaced students are transitioning from grade 8 to grade 9. Teachers are spending much more time after school helping those students who are struggling. The subcommittee will meet again December 9th.

.. Specialized Student Services

Mr. Thrope reported on the three items discussed at the subcommittee meeting:

School Lunch Program, - an informational presentation by Rob Rice, Director of Food Services on school lunches.

A -presentation by the Superintendent and discussion on hiring procedures and minority hiring in the absence of the Human Resource Officer. There was an agreement between the Supt. and members of the Diversity Task Force that they would provide a volunteer to retrieve e mail addresses from resumes materials to acknowledge and respond, and give applicants an opportunity to self identify.

A presentation by Trish Orlovsky, Chair of The Arlington Special Education Pac for Summer Proposal for special needs students aged 5 –8.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was unanimously Voted that the specialized student service subcommittee explore the feasibility and conditions of the summer program with the express condition that there be no budget impact of such a program.

COMMITTEE VOTES

.. Approval of Warrant

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was unanimously voted to approve warrant # 4039 on the amount of \$434,901.44. Mr. Schlichtman abstained on payment to MASC.

.. Field Trip Approval

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was unanimously Voted to approve the AHS Ski Club field trip to Sugar Loaf NH January 30 –February 1, 2004.

.. Student Representative to Vision 2020

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was unanimously Voted to appoint Jacob Barry as the AHS Student Representative to Vision 2020 Standing Committee

.. Date Change of November 11th meeting – Ms Owayda stated that the regularly scheduled School Committee meeting of November 11th is a holiday and the committee must vote to change the date; Suzanne suggested November 4th to work on district goals.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was unanimously Voted to change the November 11 regular school committee meeting to November 4, 2003.

Mr. Schlichtman took the opportunity to publicly thank APS Food Service Director

On a motion by Mr. Thielman and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was unanimously Voted to adjourn at 10:30 PM.

Submitted by
Karen Tassone
Committee Secretary